E
458
.1
.L92

Class E458
Book .I
.L92

CHRISTIAN LOYALTY.

A DISCOURSE,

PREACHED BEFORE THE SYNOD OF NORTHERN INDIANA AT THE OPENING OF ITS SESSIONS, AT

INDIANAPOLIS, OCTOBER 10, 1861.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE SYNOD.

BY
JOHN M. LOWRIE, D. D.
FORT WAYNE, IND.

INDIANAPOLIS:
INDIANAPOLIS JOURNAL COMPANY, PRINTERS.
1861.

CHRISTIAN LOYALTY.

A DISCOURSE,

921
1861

PREACHED BEFORE THE SYNOD OF NORTHERN INDIANA AT THE OPENING OF ITS SESSIONS, AT

INDIANAPOLIS, OCTOBER 10, 1861.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE SYNOD.

BY

JOHN M. LOWRIE, D. D.

FORT WAYNE, IND.

INDIANAPOLIS:
INDIANAPOLIS JOURNAL COMPANY, PRINTERS.
1861.

E458
.1
.L92

"The following resolution was unanimously adopted:

Resolved, That the thanks of this Synod be tendered to Rev. Dr. Lowrie for his very able discourse on Christian Loyalty, and he be requested to furnish a copy for publication."

A true extract from the Minutes.

E. W. WRIGHT, *Stated Clerk.*

CHRISTIAN LOYALTY.

TITUS, 3: 1.

"PUT THEM IN MIND TO BE SUBJECT TO PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS, TO OBEY MAGISTRATES."

These words are addressed by an aged minister of the gospel to a younger. And we, who acknowledge the inspiration of the great Apostle to the Gentiles, must admit that ministers of the church of Christ, in all ages, have here, not only words of truth as to the soundness of the doctrine inculcated, and words appropriate to the ministerial office, as to the exhortation given, but also words authoritative, as to the righteous discharge of ministerial duty. That is to say, the Holy Ghost by the mouth of Paul the aged, commands the ministers of Christ to put their hearers in mind of the duty they owe the civil government under which they are. No man that ever lived had a higher estimate of the sacred character of the gospel ministry than the apostle Paul. If ever a man had a passion for souls, if ever a man thought all other teachings tame in comparison with the spiritual instructions which lead men to the cross, if ever a minister knew truly, the spiritual functions of the church, and the appropriate duties of the ministry; if, in the discharge of any particular duty, any one minister may be a just example to others; — all these things we may grant to Paul. And here one, who determined to know nothing among men but Jesus Christ and him crucified, in addressing a younger minister touching ministerial duties, bids him remind the people of their civil obligations.

Considering, then, the topic chosen by the Apostle, and the person to whom he addressed it, we may plead Paul as a precedent upon the present occasion. Providentially called, in the regular discharge of an official duty, to address you, fathers and brethren of this venerable Synod, I may rightly choose the theme the Apostle furnishes. It is the duty of the christian ministry to remind their hearers that they are, not only christians, but citizens and patriots; that the scriptures clearly and often enjoin the careful discharge of civil obligations; and that obedience to lawful rulers is obedience to God himself; and it is the duty of ministers to remind each other that these claims of the civil government are to be laid before the people. I exhort you, my brethren in the ministry, as Paul exhorted Titus, "Put the people in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates."

Nor is it only by Paul's direct example that we may indicate the propriety of this topic in the opening discourse of the Synod. If any duty, proper for a christian, may be properly considered by christian ministers and elders; if any teachings proper for the people, are proper for our ecclesiastical gatherings; if duties binding on individuals, bind no less those who bear the responsibilities of office in the church, timely discussions especially become this service. The times in which we live are indeed times of unparalleled agitation and excitement. Men are swayed by their aroused passions and prejudice rather than by the calm voice of reason and truth; and ministers of the gospel and ecclesiastical assemblies are liable to hasty words and rash judgments. These seem, in the view of some, scarcely times to settle the proper grounds of duty, as the Church of Christ stand related to civil society. And yet such is the reasoning of shallow and timid minds. These are the very times in which to discuss earnestly just such questions. "A word spoken in the season how good it is." "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." The opportune time to rebuke any sin, is when the sin abounds; to sustain any truth, is when it suffers denial; to enforce any duty, is when that duty is trampled under foot;

when the enemy comes in like a flood, it is the Spirit of the Lord who prompts and bids us lift up a standard against him; and when, not only wrong doctrines are proclaimed, but when the attempt is made with a high hand to carry them into practical execution, he is a cowardly soldier who stands back from the fight because the storm of battle rages high. Let us indeed guard against the warping influence of exciting times; but these are the very times for instructing men upon these questions which pertain to our civil duties. Now men will hear, and think too, as ordinarily they do not; when awakened interest has broken up the fallow-ground of careless hearts, wise men should sow diligently the seeds of righteous principles which shall sink through the sods, to lie there perhaps through a stormy and inclement season, but to shoot up in the spring and harvest that rapidly follow. In every other matter the Church of God judges that Providence bids her observe the times; suit her instructions to the changing necessities of the people; stand boldly up to a crisis, especially when it comes through none of their own seeking; and look for the Divine blessing only in faithfully withstanding every evil. Why should we not judge that the duty of the church to the government under which they are, should be specially discussed when the discussion is specially needed?

There can be no controversy among us touching the question of subjection to the legitimate civil authorities of the land. Happily, the teachings of the sacred volume are explicit upon this important matter. They declare to us that civil government is an ordinance of Divine appointment; that civil rulers act by Divine authority; and that citizens should be subject, "not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake." So then, rebellion, treason, or disloyalty, is not only a crime against the civil government, but an offence against the laws of God, and should expose the guilty party to precisely the same kind of censure, proportioned to the flagrancy of the offence, what would follow any other breach of human and divine laws. The discipline exercised by the Church of Christ towards the delinquencies of men may be of various forms;

it may be exercised towards many different offences; but the common basis of all is the teaching of God's holy word; and every form of church instruction and church authority—one as truly as another—must be according to this rule. All are not of equal influence and importance, but all stand on the same basis. If a minister of God rebukes or reproves; if a church judicatory judicially condemns, or authoritatively expounds or declares, just so much power have they as they have of truth; taking cognizance of the same individuals and of the same crimes with the civil magistrate, they still exercise over these but spiritual powers; the civil authorities may punish a man for fraud or murder, and this interferes not with the distinct sentence of the Church for the same offence; whatever be the offence, the Church can but treat it in its spiritual aspects; but from this she is not to be deterred by the fact that any offence has also its entangling relations to earthly things.

But agreeing upon the general duties of the christian patriot, there is now a conflict in this nation and in the church to which we belong, between those who a little while ago seemed firmly united in one sentiment of national loyalty. There are those among us, on the one hand, who yield our cordial support to the Government of this great nation in the exercise of governmental powers; fully believing that these, so far as our forms are concerned, are constitutional; and that so far as all our citizens and all the world are concerned, they are legitimate and wise and just. We recognize no such evils in the administration of this Government as would justify the mildest civil war; we claim for it a kindly and beneficent and prosperous working, so far at least as our own citizens are concerned, far beyond any ever yet seen under human guidance; and we aver that the American citizen who shrinks from the duty of entire loyalty at such a time as this, is recreant to the very highest duty of a citizen as enjoined in the word of God.

On the other hand there are those who, granting the general basis of loyal duty as commanded in the Scriptures, do

yet affirm that in the contest between the Northern and Southern States of this Union, there is a conflict of loyal claims, and that to stand on either side of this contest is so consistent with christian character that the church of God may not venture to utter her voice upon the subject. It is alleged as a grave question for our consideration whether a citizen owes loyalty first to the Union, whose national existence alone has ever been recognized by other human Governments, or first to the particular State in which he dwells, and whose present impulses or apparent interests seem to clash with the biddings of the General Government. And although the General Assembly of our Church has taken ground upon this question, and as we believe only as such a body should; and although those who protested against the action of the General Assembly, generally, if not unanimously, professed their own loyalty to the National Government, and agreed that the Southern disloyalty had no sufficient justification; yet the position now held by many in our Southern churches, received from these protestants an unhappy appearance of plausibility, and even of authority, when the statement is made that the Church of God is not competent to decide this question, which demands the investigation of the Church, and makes it appropriate for the people of God to sustain the Assembly. For the stand taken was proper, and the utterance both loyal and timely.

The one general statement which we affirm is, that the sphere of the Church of Christ embraces all moral obligations of men; and that the power of reproving any moral evil implies and includes necessarily the power to determine the nature of that evil and the fact of its existence. If the Church may undeniably reprove disloyalty as a sin against God, then may she also inquire wherein does disloyalty consist. No matter that her inquiries lead her by paths she is not wont to tread. If the law of God is written in Hebrew and Greek, the Church must study languages to become its interpreter: if the doctrinal heretic hides himself in the mazes of a misty and vain philosophy, the Church must study metaphysics to

expose its folly: if men trample upon the law of God and then run for shelter behind the ramparts of political opinions, the Church may attack and storm their fortress, justified by the object she has in view, so long as she uses legitimate means to reach it. The chief aim of a physician is to heal diseases. But this presupposes that he must be able to distinguish diseases, their reality, nature and extent, and that he may go where the patient is to be found, though he should enter disreputable abodes and prescribe to wicked persons. So they who maintain the authority of that law which the Apostle tells us "was made for the lawless and the DISLOYAL,"* (see the original word, 1 Tim. 1:9,) are competent to follow where the law goes, to judge the wide wanderings of human transgression. If any man ventures to raise his hand against a lawful authority, the Church is expressly justified in condemning that very thing: the excuses he makes she is competent to weigh: and we may as well give up church authority altogether as allow that any plea of innocence or justification is a bar to jurisdiction. Admit that disloyalty is a crime and its investigation is a right. If even, as is alleged, there is a conflict between the State and the National Authorities, the Church of God does not depart from her sphere when she speaks of such things: and even upon the principles of these protestants she is abundantly justified in speaking now, because this is not the true state of the present case.

We do not claim, let it be distinctly understood, that the Church of God is bound always to utter her voice when questions of loyalty are discussed in any community. The revolutions which sometimes take place in civil government usually proceed through so many changes: the "long train of abuses" tending towards despotism may gather its strength so slowly, that the very difficulty of deciding where allegiance is extinguished and resistance may begin, may be thought a valid reason why wise men and a wise Church should go forward only at the manifest biddings of Providence. Every case of

* ἀνυποτάκτοις, "Contumaces, refractarios, contemptores magistratuum ac legum eorumque per quos publica administrantur."—ROSENMULLER.

duty that depends upon the changes of time and circumstances, involves its own peculiar perplexities; and just where her individual members may hesitate as to the path of duty, move slowly and wait for light, may the Church of God do likewise. Or if beyond this, we allow more serious and careful deliberation before her voice is uttered, we still affirm that the principles upon which the christian duty of any person is decided, are the same principles upon which the Church may decide her action. So long as the Church confines her decisions to questions of moral duty, she is within her proper sphere; and this none the less because legal rights or political principles may be involved in the same. If two of her members claim each a legal right to a disputed estate, she is no judge or divider between them; and yet she may inquire into the facts, and issue her reproofs upon the charge that the pretensions of one are forged or dishonest.

The propriety of the action of the General Assembly in declaring the obligations of our national loyalty may be affirmed in view of the great moral importance of the questions at issue.

In the *First* place, the doctrine of Secession is itself a direct breach of the Covenant made in the United States Constitution and adopted by the people of the entire Union. This cannot be evaded by saying that the question turns upon the construction of a political matter; unless the Church is consistently to refuse her reproofs of crime because of the mere difficulty of proving it. There is no difficulty in understanding the breach of Covenant. Its VI article expressly makes the United States Constitution the supreme law of the land, so binds the judges in every State, and this expressly, "anything in the constitution or laws of any State to the contrary notwithstanding." We need not discuss now any reasons which might justify the people of the United States in throwing off the United States Constitution. We merely say that having adopted that Constitution, there is no longer any room for the question whether the State or the Nation is supreme: and the man who makes his State allegiance his reason for

disloyalty to the Nation is, upon the very face of the document, a *covenant breaker.*

Secondly, Secession involves abundant perjury. Among the thousands of office-holders in the Southern States, whether for State or Federal offices, every man swore solemnly to support the United States Constitution; among the thousands of naturalized citizens, every man took an oath, in which not a word is said about State authority, but where allegiance to the United States is solemnly promised, and allegiance to every other sovereign power solemnly renounced. There was no room for these men to raise the question of State or national supremacy, and how many of them are this day perjured.

Thirdly. The crime of disloyalty itself, is the very highest a citizen can commit in that capacity; and is of sufficient importance to demand that Church Assemblies should take cognizance of it, and decide when it has been committed, even though this should seem to demand the investigation of political principles. If one single church member had been guilty of these things—of the breach of covenant, of the perjury, of the treason involved in secession, he would have found no relief from the censure of the Church, on the plea that it was but a political offence. Yet the principles involved are the same, and are only the more dangerous and deserving of pointed rebuke, when thousands have used them to turn the nation upside down. If we admit that the Church of God is the just interpreter of the moral law, then we must demand in her an acquaintance with the facts and principles which enable her to make a just interpretation. We do not excuse her from the discharge of her duty upon the plea that it is difficult or delicate: we do not allow that the liability of making an unwise or unjust decision should lead the Church to shrink from making any decision at all; we see no reason why a righteous interpretation of the moral law may not furnish a term of christian communion with as little objection as the interpretation of even minor matters of doctrine, which we so frequently make. We believe that scarcely any matter of interpretation touching the law of God, is of greater importance to the well-

being of society, of individuals, and of the Church itself, than that which regards the duties which citizens owe to a lawful government. We are willing that the largest exercise of prudence and wisdom should be shown by the Church in discussing and deciding upon questions that are related to the politics of the land; but so far as these things have any moral bearing, the Church of God should understand them, and bear her timely testimony respecting them. Let the mischievous dogma, "religion has nothing to do with politics," become the settled faith of this land; let the Churches endorse the error, and the ruin of the nation is sealed. Carry out the principle consistently, and we will observe no more fast days for national sins; offer no more prayers for national rulers, and urge no righteous principles in the conducting of our elections. But the Church has to do with morals, even in politics; and if she may rebuke any sin, she is competent to ask, What is the nature of this sin? and in whom does it exist? And surely if any sin against authorities may ever be rebuked, the very highest crime of which a citizen is capable, must not stand forth as the exception. Rebellion is a proper object for the censures of the Church; it is within the sphere of the Church to ascertain whether this sin is or is not committed within her borders; and while we acknowledge the right of revolution on the part of an oppressed people to be justified by the circumstances which bring it into being, we aver that the pulpits of this land, and the ecclesiastical Assemblies of this land should teach the people that there is the widest possible difference between revolutions against despotism, and insurrections against constitutional law.

For the General Assembly to exercise this power was also but to do as our ecclesiastical Assemblies have ever done in all our history. Even in times when the divine right of kings found acknowledgment far beyond the claims now conceded to civil rulers, the Church of Scotland had no hesitation in making her voice heard in civil affairs. And it ought to be acknowledged that when our venerable mother Synod supported the Continental Congress in the times of the Revolutionary

War, it was a step far in advance of the action of the late General Assembly. Without denying, even while in profession supporting the authority of the King of Great Britain, the Presbyterian churches of this land were exhorted to support and to pray for the Continental Congress, though it had taken up arms against the king. Surely a church that could gather the evidence and decide upon it, to bid the people break the bonds of allegiance, may lawfully teach their righteous maintenance. To decide that a legitimate government has become oppressive; to urge citizens to give up their former loyalty; to come out boldly in favor of a new system of things, is certainly a far more difficult thing, than to maintain a long-existing and beneficent government. And the inferior judicatories of our Church have not hesitated to exercise the very right to speak on those subjects which the Assembly has claimed. This has been done in all sections of the land. The Synod of South Carolina sanctioned the secession movement in advance of the action of that State. Other Synods and Presbyteries in all the land have felt free to act on both sides of the question. Indeed those who chiefly oppose the Assembly's action, have yet declared that such action might properly be taken by the Presbyteries and Synods of the North; and that if Presbyteries were all united, they might declare their sentiments as freely as they please. This, in our view, settles the full propriety of the Assembly's decision. When the question was discussed, and these things fairly admitted; when ministers claimed the right to contend for these principles in public, by pulpit and press, no wonder the majority rapidly changed sides and declared that the Assembly could do so too. For surely principles like these depend neither upon place nor numbers: no Church Assembly has an authority to be denied to another. If a Presbytery or Synod may declare the citizen's duty to his country, no precept of the Bible, and no solid reasonings forbid the General Assembly to do the same.

We should not forget, moreover, that this very question of loyalty is so clearly taught in the Scriptures, is of so pressing

importance, and comes before Christian people so frequently, that it was already virtually settled all over the land by the members and Ministers of every Church. We could not ignore these principles. The Divine word says too much about government, enjoins too clearly the duty of a citizen, and calls too explicitly for the constant offering of public and private prayer, to allow us to escape the responsibility of deciding where our fealty is due, on the plea that we are meddling with politics. Even those High Church Prelatists, who stand so much above the sphere of common mortals that they cannot stoop to touch a moral question, and who universally, as we believe, refused to decide this matter in their conventions, were yet compelled to decide it in their separate congregations and in the worship of every Sabbath. In fact, every pulpit in the land decided this very question before the Assembly met. If any minister formerly prayed for the U. S. Government, and now neglected it, this falling off from former duty was a disloyal decision; any minister praying for different rulers decided the question. Why should a Church assembly stand back from that which necessarily must be done in the regular discharge of his duty by every minister in his pulpit, and indeed by every christian at the family altar? Especially, why should our Assembly, that had never before hesitated to express its loyalty, stop at the very juncture when such hesitation would have all the fatal effects of a disloyal decision?

For it is our firm conviction, not only that a decision given when the times demand it, in the face of opposition, either temporizing or disloyal, is worth a thousand formal expressions of more peaceful times, but that the situation of thousands of Presbyterians in the Southern States demanded this support to their loyalty from the supreme judicatory of the Church. Three classes of Presbyterians were in the South:

First.—Those who were disloyal, and meant to be so, in spite of all expositions and expostulations on the part of their brethren; and these deserved the full force of our plainest rebukes; nor are their sincere convictions any better defence

for their treason, than the similar sincerity of thousands of Prelatists, Romanists, Baptists and Arminians, against whose departure from christian doctrine as we receive it, the Presbyterian Church testifies.

Secondly.—There are men in the South who thought that a position of neutrality, both in Church and State, was fitting in such a crisis; and these may receive our pity or our scorn, according as we classify them in the wide extremes of weakness on the one hand, or secret disloyalty on the other.

But thirdly.—The men of the South who are truly loyal to this Government, deserved and should have received the cordial support of the General Assembly in declaring the authority to which their allegiance, for conscience sake, was due.

Nothing can be further, both from the words and sense of the Assembly's declarations, than to allege that loyal men are harshly and cruelly treated. They were supported, just as the deliverances of the Church ever support a conscientious man, by declaring the clear views of the Supreme Assembly upon a duty from which he is tempted to decline. It may be acknowledged that many of these men were surrounded by difficult and trying circumstances, and that even they might be more suspected and harassed because of the Assembly's action; but they were enjoined to support the Federal Government only "so far as in them lay;" and even those of them who felt that the Assembly acted inexpediently would be disposed, just so far as they were truly loyal, to approve of the design and spirit of this entire action. And just because the sphere of the Church lies in morals and matters of conscience, all the arguments on this subject drawn from the actual exercise of authority over Southern men by the Southern Confederacy, are nothing to the purpose. It is claimed that the Church must recognize a *de facto* government. But this is far from being so, absolutely and without regard to the nature and character of the government. The Church should teach men, and especially should tell her own members in an hour of trial, that more is required to change a man's allegiance, than the mere power over his person and his pro-

perty. Men may be prisoners of war in the hands of their enemies; they may be captives in a robber's cave or a pirate's vessel; they may fall into the hands of a mob or a feeble insurrection, and in all these cases they may be subject to powers which it would be madness to resist. Under such authority, men may be obliged to submission and obedience, but they do not owe loyalty. It is one thing to be subject for wrath—it may be quite another to be subject for conscience sake. The Church of God would not put arms into a martyr's hands, but she would aid him to maintain his principles the hour of sternest trial; and we believe that many a loyal conscience in the South was strengthened by the affirmation of the Assembly's loyalty. To resist existing authority, is not to resist lawful authority, and this especially when the existing authority has itself had but a brief existence, has risen upon resistance to authority long reverenced as legitimate, and is justified by no oppression felt by the loyal subject. Such a government may bind the limbs, confiscate the property, or command the unwilling service. Let religion and the Church speak just here, as they should, to say it cannot bind the conscience.

So far are we from agreeing with these protestants when they declare this action of the Assembly to be a departure from our old paths, we allege that their views tend to a dangerous form of high church peculiarities, foreign to the distinctive spirit of Presbyterianism, and now attenpting its encroachments upon us to the signal marring of our spiritual prosperity. Is it not significant, as indicating what true Presbyterianism is, that among the many Presbyterian bodies of this land—and, as we have said, including our own inferior judicatories—the Old School General Assembly alone has need to vindicate its jurisdiction in this case? Should it not be thought that one passage from our own Confession of Faith is decisive of the question? "They who, upon pretence of christian liberty, do practice any sin, * * do thereby destroy the end of christian liberty." "And because the powers which God hath ordained, and the liberty which Christ

hath purchased, are not intended by God to destroy, but mutually to uphold and preserve one another; they who, upon the pretence of christian liberty, shall oppose any lawful power or the lawful exercise of it, whether it be civil or ecclesiastical, resist the ordinance of God." (Conf. Faith, ch. xx: § 3 and 4.) God alone is Lord of the conscience; but the pretence of either christian or civil liberty is no bar to the investigation of offences. Nor can the views of the protestants be consistently carried out without the utter destruction of all that is orderly and distinctive in the Presbyterian Church. It is true, in one sense, that "the Church has no right to make anything a condition of christian or ministerial fellowship which is not enjoined or required in the Scriptures and the standards of the Church;" but it is not Presbyterianism to make our terms of communion so wide as to admit every man who recognizes the authority of the Scriptures; every man whose christian character we presume not to deny; nor even every man who can subscribe to our doctrinal standards. Without now discussing the relative importance of doctrine and duty, we affirm that "truth is in order to godliness;" that the consciences of christian men may as *rightly* be offended at immorality as at heresy; and that a Church which so clearly defines its doctrinal position and stands separate from so many conscientious christians in other communions, need not wonder that thousands of her members revolt at the thought of sitting down at the Lord's table in unbroken christian fellowship with men who plead for the perpetuity of slavery, who are among the chief abettors of treason, and whose hands, in a warfare unjustifiable and wicked, both as to its means and its ends, are dyed in the blood of their brethren.

To these things we may add that a position of neutrality, deliberately taken, seemed as really a decision of the question as that the Assembly made. This made the adoption of any other paper than the one first offered to the Assembly so undesirable. This, in part, accounts for the change in the votes. Many persons, induced partly by policy, partly by

the usual position of extreme conservatism held by our Church, partly by the Assembly's practice which rarely decides questions *in thesi*,* voted at first to do nothing; but when they were disposed to do anything, they could stop nowhere short of what the Assembly did. We cannot consent to the statements so widely made, that outside pressure forced the Assembly's action. Men accustomed to watch closely the Assembly's doings will declare that rarely has that body known efforts more strenuous, more unjustifiable or more persistent to prevent any loyal expression. Weeks before the Assembly met the key note was struck by influential fingers "that the Assembly would do only the usual routine of business;" and though of course this was without authority, it was urged as a pledge that the Presbyteries expected the Assembly's silence, and had its influence upon the earliest voting. And though in a time of so much excitement we wonder not that the members were earnest on their respective sides; and we care not, as we could, to cast back the charge of *undue* pressure, we cannot but think that such a complaint comes with the worst possible grace from men who first attempted, and in the most discourteous manner, to gag discussion; who first introduced telegraphic interference from Cabinet officers; who arrayed the influence of prominent ministers, not members of the house, against the Assembly's action; whose very papers, offered for adoption, were prepared by such hands; whose sentiments were reiterated around the social board in the very hospitalities the Assembly enjoyed; and whose threatenings of the division of the Church, in consequence of this action, were as loud and as long as any threats against it. We affirm that a *deliberate* neutrality was impossible. The Assembly took the right ground; or should have taken none; and the very language of the protest confesses this. The protestants found it impossible to *speak* and

*Although the General Assembly usually avoids decisions *in thesi*, yet its *testimonies* are generally of this nature; and precedents can easily be found of such business originating with the Assembly. The famous action of 1818, on the subject of slavery, originated in that Assembly. (See Gen. Assembly Minutes, pp. 688, 691.

be neutral. They therefore decide that it would be treasonable for Southern christians to support the Federal Government. They declare that the Assembly forces them (*i. e.*, Southern Presbyterians) to choose between allegiance to their States and allegiance to the Church. If they mean all this language implies, they should have found fault with the Assembly, not for meddling with this question, but for making a decision the reverse of right. So then the answer to the protest might have gone a step further. "The protestants would have us recognize" not only "as good Presbyterians" but as truly loyal to their States, "men whom our own Government, with the approval of Christendom, may soon execute as traitors."

But while we thus vindicate the province of the Church of God to settle questions of moral duty, even though they do concern the civil authority; while we affirm the entire propriety of the Assembly's action, even though it touches conflicting claims of allegiance, we yet distinctly deny that this is truly the nature of the present crisis. State rights have been abundantly spoken of; they have been alleged as the foundation of secession ordinances; and yet in no just sense is the present conflict between the separate Southern States and the National Government. It is a rebellion to all intents and in every movement; the Assembly had every means of knowing this; almost every member upon the floor conceded this as the true view of the case; and if ever rebellion should be reproved by the Church, an utterance was timely then.

The proof lies partly in these things:

1st. It is an important thought, which has become familiar in these discussions, that with the single exception of Texas, no one of the Southern States ever has had a sovereign and independent existence. They have laws and constitutions; but these have co-existed with a Federal Constitution made by express words the Supreme law of the land; and a city by its laws and officers may as well rise against a State as a State against the nation. No one of the States ever had an existence apart from the Union; no one ever levied war, con-

cluded peace, contracted alliances, established commerce, coined money, or did any of the peculiar acts of independent States; no one has a single port of entry under all their laws upon 2,000 miles of sea coast; and no one can give a passport to a single citizen going abroad. Allegiance may be due to such States from their citizens, as a city may demand obedience to its municipal authorities; but such States are not competent to claim the loyalty of the people in conflict with the National rule.

2d. Even apart from this statement, it is not true that the States, as States, have decided the leave the Union. Every Christian citizen, subject for conscience sake, may be expected to inquire whether his State has indeed bidden him renounce the National Government. Not a single State has properly decided this question. The leaders of the rebellion have not ventured to appeal to the free election of the people; where elections have been held, no fair decision has been allowed; and every truly loyal heart should refuse such leaders and be sustained in that refusal by loyal men everywhere. Could the National Government at this hour recognize as correct the abstract doctrine of secession, the fact could not still be recognized. No secession ordinance has been fairly submitted to the people of any State; no loyal citizen has any right to decide that his State government and the National Government are in conflict; the disloyal States are acting in violation of their own constitutions, and the National Government directly according to the Constitution; and the fair presumption is, that thousands of loyal men, now forced to silence and subjection by unconstitutional powers, are expecting the National Government, as speedily as possible, to protect them and their interests against the lawless politicians who control the insurrection. The separate States have never told their citizens by any lawful voice to stand aside from the Union.

3d. The conflict is not now, and has not been, between those States and the General Government. If even we allow that those who claim the control of affairs in each seceding

State, are the State, we point to the significant and important fact, that not a single State thus separated by ordinance from the Union, has made any attempt to exist as a sovereign State. The leaders, in every case, without consulting the people, often before the mockery of a seceding ordinance, have made application to a new government, which bears no marks of an independent and sovereign existence, save the power to levy an unconcluded war. How can we treat those States as sovereign, or speak of their authority conflicting with that which has been sovereign over us all our lives, when they take no step as sovereign States? No State has sought separate alliances, or separate recognition abroad; no State has declared war against the United States; and the National Government now is not at war with Virginia, or South Carolina, or Louisiana. When a question of etiquette arose for the exchange of prisoners, it was not demanded that we should recognize State authorities, but the so-called Confederate authorities. The men now in arms in the Southern part of this land, have transferred their allegiance from the national government to another government never known before; that new government seeks the position of independence it unquestionably never held; that government, with a new name, a new flag, a new constitution, and new officers, and a place to win among the nations of the earth, is in array against the constitution and laws that our fathers established; and that is not a true statement, which declares that this is a conflict between each man's own State and the Union.

So, 4th, The attempts made to force other States into the Southern Confederacy, clearly prove that in no case has the conflict of authority been between the States and the General Government. Witness the abundant preparations made to support the Southern Confederacy before the separate States had gone through even the forms of secession ordinances; witness the attempts to interfere with States that have not passed any such ordinances; above all, see that no respect is paid to State rights, when they stand opposed to the wishes of the Southern schemists. No sooner have the people of

Kentucky decided, in the most triumphant manner, to remain with the Union, and the Legislature, chosen at such a crisis, and directly representing the people, have sustained this decision by overwhelming majorities, than the true standing of the South toward State rights and State authorities is immediately made known. An army General, acting under a Kentucky commission until the voice of Kentucky is heard, immediately produces another commission from the so-called Confederate government, that overrides the authority of the State, declares that "the Legislature has been faithless to the will of the people;" and himself a son of Kentucky, draws his sword both against his native State and nation; and another General in the service of the same power, and himself from another State, announces, as his excuse for invading Kentucky, that the "South claims her territory and will not consent to give it up." The war is not between the States and the Nation, nor the conflicting claims of allegiance between the separate States and the General Government. The Southern people themselves show that a new and half-erected power is attempting to break down the only supreme government to which the people of the United States owe their allegiance.

There seems no just reason, then, why we should not decide upon a case like this. If ever a church tribunal should declare the guilt of disloyalty and rebellion beyond the mere abstract crime, the General Assembly was cognizant of facts enough to speak plainly in this particular instance. The same reasons which could justify any minister of the gospel to urge loyalty from the pulpit or to declare from the press that the Southern rebellion was unjustifiable, wicked, and destructive to high interests both in the State and in the Church, would justify him in so declaring as a member of a Church court. The same Bible teaches me the principles I am to believe as a christian, preach as a minister, and maintain in the actings of any Church court; nor, as to principle, dare I say that in the pulpit which it would be unrighteous to declare in the acts of the General Assembly. And the whole aspect of things, before and since the Assembly's sessions, justifies that

action. No such reasons exist for the rebellion of the Southern States as justify their acts of civil war; there are no proofs of oppression on the part of the General Government; with the Southern institutions no governmental interference has been made; indeed a government chiefly administered by themselves could not possibly be hostile to the South; and even the incoming administration could have been hindered and hampered in every unfavorable movement, by Southern influence and Southern votes, if constitutional means had been used in the Union. Moreover the position of the North and the actings of both parties make this as clear a case of rebellion as history records. We dare not admit the doctrine of peaceable secession if we expect a national existence at all; and forcible disunion is but the beginning of a strife whose end our children will not see.

And, as the struggle has been forced upon the Nation, so every step, on our part, has been marked with a forbearance which seemed sometimes scarcely to deserve the name of a self-defence. Aggressions began with them; the shedding of blood began with them; they have been defiant from the beginning and everywhere, not less in their pulpits and church judicatories, than in their Legislatures and in their armies, in striking contrast with the conciliatory policy of Church and State, of press and pulpit in the North. We have allowed them to erect their fortifications around ours for their destruction; we have left our garrisons to feebleness and starvation rather than give them offence; we have released prisoners taken with arms in their hands upon any show of allegiance; we have surrendered their escaped slaves and allowed them to be carried back to work in the trenches against us; we have kept up our mail routes and given them the advantages of the Government to the extreme of indulgence; we have permitted commerce to carry supplies of provisions, and, until a very recent period, of arms and ammunition; and in our tenderness not to trample upon any alleged right, we have held back United States troops from United States soil; and while Secessionists perfected their schemes upon ground claimed as neu-

tral, the Government has waited invitations to advance where it has always had the right to go. Yet as the Government has been forbearing, the rebellion has been not only unprovoked in its nature, but especially wicked and immoral in its measures. No righteous undertaking ever demanded the deceit and falsehood and fraud that have characterized this cause from the beginning until now. The election of the present Chief Magistrate was but a pretext to hurry on a treasonable plot which his defeat could only have delayed. And when we consider that men high in office, and hitherto claiming an honorable reputation, have not hesitated to use their official stations to betray the Government; to violate their solemn oaths as officers; to transfer large amounts of property with which they are entrusted to hostile hands; and to maintain deceitful professions of loyalty for months while secretly plotting to destroy the Government; when we remember the manner in which this warfare has been carried on, by privateers sailing under foreign flags, by firing upon pickets, by poisoning food and fountains, and by waylaying railroad trains and causing disastrous catastrophes; when, moreover, we are explicitly told what is the great object of the new Confederacy; when a prominent Presbyterian periodical assures us that "the Presbyterians of the South, in a certain sense, love slavery as truly as they love liberty;"* and a prominent Presbyterian pulpit claims for the South a Divine mission to perpetuate slavery; and a high official declares that slavery, avowedly unsupported under the old Constitution, is "the corner stone of the new republic;" we hardly know what disloyalty the church of God ever dares condemn, if she may not speak boldly at such a time as this.

Fathers and brethren of this venerable Synod! it is not for the Church of God to choose for herself the scenes through which she must pass; the discussions which the times may force upon her; or the results that are to follow the duties we discharge. But God, who orders our lot in times of sad-

* Southern Presb. Rev. Vol. 14, 282.

ness and trouble, means not that we should sit down either indifferent or idle. If we were permitted our choice, how changed would be this day our land and the Church. The pulpits of Presbyterian churches in the South at no distant day in the past were one with us, alike in Christian doctrine and in the feelings of a loyal patriotism. Without adverting now to the gradual changes running backwards for a generation, how rapid and apparently how calamitous the changes that have occurred since we last met in Synod! Even then indeed we had our fears, as the dark storm gathered upon the distant horizon: but our unpractised eyes did not discern, that like the storms of the Gulf of Mexico, a little cloud betokened a rapid and destructive hurricane. May the likeness be here also: that tropical storms of the greatest violence are soonest over! Though not ignorant of changing views in the South, we could not then think that Southern pulpits would boldly and openly proclaim the rightfulness and perpetuity of slavery: that Southern judicatories would proclaim disloyalty; that ministers of the Gospel would draw the sword of war and tread the field of strife. As little did we dream that our National and Ecclesiastical prosperity should be so suddenly checked: our property diverted from the channels of peace and benevolence: and our people mustered for the battle. Forced to accept all these facts as they rise before us, let us on the one hand gird ourselves for the duties they lay upon us, and on the other let us hold fast the supports and consolations which the faith of Christ imparts. Let us speak of duty in two respects:

1st. Let us observe the times. Let us meet the issue of all questions, whether in the Church as christians, or in the State as citizens: in the pulpit as ministers, in the judicatory as teaching or ruling elders; by the voice and by the press, in the fear of God and undeterred by the opposition of those whose standing we respect, but whose teachings we cannot receive. Let us keep in mind that God has given no nobler heritage to any people than that which our fathers have handed down to us: and let us not stand by with our hands either

folded in indifference, or tied fast by craven cowardice, by politic expediency, or by a morbid sensitiveness to touch upon civil matters; and allow these inestimable privileges to be wrested from our feeble grasp. How can we answer to our country, answer to the world, answer to posterity, answer to God, if we stand not in our lot, and do all in our power to maintain unbroken our glorious union, and the covenants of our fathers? We choose not war. We delight not in war. We mourn our every field of conflict. We weep over every fallen soldier, and this, indeed, though he has fallen as a traitor in arms against the government. Yet we vindicate a war so forced upon us—so vital to the upholding of this government; so needful for the good of posterity. We pray for our interests, civil and military; we pray for the success of our arms on every field of strife; we wish wisdom in our counsels, and confusion to every scheme of treason; and we could not vindicate such pleadings and actings of patriotism, if conscience and the Bible did not bid us do the like in the judicatories of the Church.

But as to duty, 2d, let us ever remember that these are not the chief duties of the Christian Ministry. Let us ever keep in mind that our chief calling is to instruct men in spiritual things—to aim at saving souls—and all other things with us should be subordinate to the great aim. While then, we are decided and outspoken in supporting the government of the land, while we obey the Apostle's injunction and put the people in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, while in this we are but obeying God, there is no need for the frequent discussion of such themes in the pulpit. It is our wisdom to speak seldom of themes not directly religious. And, in these times of high excitement, when people read so much all the week, they ought to find quiet in the sanctuary upon the Sabbath, and be led away from the cares of this world, to thoughts of another. If neither they nor we can or should dismiss our anxieties for our beloved land upon the Sabbath, let them find constant expression rather with the voice of prayer than of pulpit instruction; and thus even in these times let God's day be the

day of rest. The clear, calm, decided expression of our duty in these matters is neither uncalled for, nor unnecessary, nor uninfluential in a crisis like this; but as we are surrounded by dying sinners, as the unavoidable excitements of the times turn men more than usually away from thoughts of personal salvation, as religion suffers in almost every possible way, and as none will help if the ministers of Christ desert their posts, let us be more diligent than ever to teach the spiritual things of the kingdom, more zealous than ever to rescue souls from increasing dangers, more watchful than ever for the due and prudent discharge of every obligation, and more prayerful than ever in this season when our land and our churches, our people and our own souls do so much need the Divine guidance and protection and blessing.

And this then for Christian consolation is our final thought; that we may commit all our perplexities and sorrows to God. This dark and violent storm has not arisen by chance.

> "The God that rules on high,
> And thunders when he please,
> That rides upon the stormy sky,
> And manages the seas,
> THIS AWFUL GOD IS OURS!"

Through darkness to light, many a time has he led his Church. We are upon the lake, tossed by the waves, and striving against the tempest, and we wonder why he has sent us forth; but on the mountain above, Jesus prays for his disciples in the ship, and in the fourth watch he will walk the stormy billows and calm their rage to peace. God rules these agitations. We know not their beneficial purposes in his Providence; but we know that he does all things well. Deserving his chastisements we bow beneath his rod; but knowing his mercy and wisdom, we hope that good for this entire nation, and blessings for the world, will result from these troubles. It is not for man to discern what form the blessing will take; but christians may believe and pray that God designs blessings to his Church, in conception and measure above our highest thoughts.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 012 026 314 6